

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8373

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0627

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EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM, US

SUBJ: ISSUES TO BE RAISED DURING FORNMIN'S VISIT

REF (A) STATE 84250, (B) STATE 84251,

1. THE PRIMARY REASON FOR FORNMIR ALLADAYE'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON (AND WE ARE SURE THIS IS AS OBVIOUS TO THE DEPT AS IT IS TO US) IS THE COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM. ANYTHING ELSE WILL BE, FROM HIS VIEWPOINT, SECONDARY IN IMPORTANCE. AS HIS LETTER STATES, HE WANTS "TO INCREASE AND IMPROVE OUR COOPERATION." THE WORD "COOPERATION" IN GPRB PARLANCE MEANS AID. IN THAT CONNECTION WE ARE CERTAIN THAT ALLADAYE WILL ALSO SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH AID ADMINISTRATOR PARKER.

2. THE MIN WILL FIRST OF ALL BE SEEKING ASSURANCES THAT THE BRIDGE DAM PROJECT WILL GO FORWARD NOW THAT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE INDEMNIFICATION OF THE AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES HAVE GOTTEN UNDERWAY. HE WILL PUSH FOR A ONE YEAR EXTENSION OF THE MAY 15 DEADLINE ON THE TERMINAL DATE FOR FULFILLING THE CONDITIONS PRECEDENT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. IF WE WISH TO GO AHEAD WITH THE PROJECT, AN EXTENSION OF THREE MONTHS OR SO IS INDEED NECESSARY TO ARRANGE ADDITIONAL FUNDING. IN VIEW OF INFLATIONARY TRENDS, AID LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROBLEMS OF COORDINATION WITH THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, A LONGER EXTENSION WOULD CREATE MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT
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WOULD SOLVE. ALLADAYE WILL ALSO SEEK THE US TO COME UP

WITH THE ADDITIONAL FUNDS NECESSARY TO CONSTRUCT THE BRIDGE. (\$7 MILLION IS NEEDED FOR THE FULL FOUR LANE BRIDGE AND APPROACHES OR A MINIMUM OF \$3.5 MILLION FOR A TWO LANE ONE.) IF WE WISH TO BE FORTHCOMING BUT NOT TO PROVIDE MORE FUNDS, WE COULD OFFER OUR GOOD OFFICES IN CONTACTING OTHER POTENTIAL DONORS ON BENIN'S BEHALF (EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT FUND, FRANCE OR THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK).

3. IN ADDITION TO THE COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM, ALLADAYE MAY SEEK A COMMITMENT FOR FUTURE AMERICAN AID. HIS SHOPPING LIST MIGHT INCLUDE US PARTICIPATION IN FUNDING THE EXPANSION OF THE PORT OF COTONOU AND THE EXTENSION OF THE RAILROAD FROM PARAKOU TO NIAMEY, NIGER. THE ESTIMATED COST OF THE RAILROAD EXTENSION IS \$120 MILLION. FRANCE HAS AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FINANCING IF BENIN AND NIGER CAN PUT TOGETHER A CONSORTIUM OF OTHER INVESTORS. THE FIGURE FOR THE PORT EXPANSION IS BETWEEN \$20 AND \$30 MILLION. BENIN MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN SOME ASSISTANCE IN THE AGRICULTURAL FIELD.

4. THE MINISTER WILL NOT APOLOGIZE FOR THE TREATMENT OF AMB ENGLE OR ADMIT THAT MISTREATMENT WAS PURELY IN THE IMAGINATION OF THE AMB OR AT BEST A MISINTERPRETATION DUE TO THE AMB'S INADEQUATE COMMAND OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE. IN THE PRIVACY OF A HIGH LEVEL MEETING IN WASHINGTON, THE MIN WILL PROBABLY GIVE THE REQUESTED ASSURANCES RE THE FUTURE TREATMENT OF AMERICAN REPS.

5. ALLADAYE MAY REPEAT SPECIFIC CHARGES OF INTENTIONAL MALEVOLENCE BY THE AMB. ALLADAYE HAS ALLEGED TO ME THAT PRIOR TO OUR FEB 17 MEETING (SEE COTONOU 304), HE HAD ASSURED AMB ENGLE OF BENIN'S INTENTION TO IMPROVE ITS UN RECORD. MY EXPRESSION OF SATISFACTION AT HIS FEB 17 PROMISE OF MODERATION AT THE UN INDICATED TO HIM THAT THE AMB HAD INTENTIONALLY NOT PASSED ON THESE EARLIER ASSURANCES. THE EMBASSY HAS OFTEN BEEN ACCUSED BY GPRB OF NOT FAITHFULLY REPORTING CONVERSATIONS AND EVENTS HERE TO OUR GOVERNMENT.

6. WE BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT FURTHER EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO DISABUSE ALLADAYE OF CERTAIN MISCONCEPTIONS HIS GOVT ENTERTAINS. OF PRIME IMPORTANCE IS BELIEF THAT USG
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IS HOSTILE TO BENIN, PRO FORMA, BECAUSE BENIN HAS TAKEN A MARXIST-LENINIST COURSE. AMB ENGLE AND OTHER EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAVE TRIED TO DISABUSE BENIN OF THIS. THE FORNMIN MAY UNDERSTAND OR PROFESS TO UNDERSTAND, BUT CERTAINLY A NUMBER OF HIS MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES CONTINUE TO HOLD THIS ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTION. POINT SHOULD BE STRESSED THAT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORIENTATION OF BENIN IS STRICTLY BENIN'S INTERNAL AFFAIR, THAT ANY UNHAPPINESS WITH BENIN COMES FROM SPECIFIC BENINESE

ACTS, INCLUDING GRANTING LANDING RIGHTS TO SOVIET PLANES
SUPPLYING ANGOLA, UN VOTING RECORDS, VITRIOLIC ATTACKS
AT THE UN, THE OAU, AND IN THE GOVT RUN PRESS. THE CHANCERY
ISSUE MIGHT ALSO BE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE, POINTING OUT THAT
SUCH ACTION AGAINST A US EMBASSY HAS NEVER TAKEN PLACE
BEFORE.

7. WE ALSO THINK THIS CAN BE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO CORRECT
ALLADAYE'S REPEATED CHARGES THAT EMBASSY FAILED TO REPORT
ACCURATELY BENIN'S VIEWWS, AND THE IDEA THAT SOME BENINESE
OFFICIALS HAVE THAT THE DEPT AND EMBASSY ARE NOT OF ONE MIND.

8. ON A MORE GENERAL PLANE, WE WOULD CONSIDER IT USEFUL TO
REMIND ALLADAYE THAT ALL OF THE RESTRICTIONS PLACED BY THE
GPRB ON CONTACT BETWEEN DIPLOMATS AND BENINESE PREVENTS THE
DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS UPON WHICH MUTUAL
UNDERSTANDING CAN DEVELOP.

9. COMMENT: OUR INDICATES ARE THAT ALLADAYE IS WEAK WITHIN
GPRB RULING CIRCLES. ANY COMMITMENTS HE MAY MAKE SHOULD BE
VIEWED AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND. THE RADICAL EXTREMISTS ON THE
POLITBUREAU COULD EASILY OVERRULE HIM ON MATTERS OF BENINESE
ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS TOWARD US.

10. FYI: WE SEE IN THE TIMEFRAME SUGGESTED FOR ALLADAYE'S
VISIT THE POSSIBILITY THAT BENIN MAY BB ANGLING FOR THE SEC-
RETARY TO STOP HERE DURING THIS UPCOMING AFRICAN TOUR.
EMBASSY WOULD MOST STRONGLY OPPOSE SUCH A VISIT AS IT WOULD
GIVE THE KEREKOU REGIME MORE STATUE THAN WE THINK WARRANTED.
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